

[Mrs. Phoebe Arnett]

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Page NO. 1. Life History

Folklore,

Miss Effie Cowan,

McLennan County, Texas,

District 8. No words 2,250

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REFERENCE:

"Interview with Mrs Phoebe Arnett, White Pioneer, Stranger, Texas.

"I was born in Robertson County on the 30th day of July 1848. My parents were Mark and [?] Polly Sommerville. They came to Texas when it was under the rule of Mexico and settled near the present town of old Wheelock. They lived with the Wheelock [Wheelocks?] and a few other families in a fort the first two years. This was for protection against the Indians.

"This community was a small settlement situated near the town of Franklin in Robertson County. Most of these settlers came from Tennessee with Sterling Robertson (for whom Robertson county was named). I was 13 years old when the war War between the states States started, and can remember when it was declared and the southern Southern states seceded from the Union. There was a company formed at Wheelock

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known as the Wheelock Company, I do not remember the other name, what company it was, but I do remember that I had a cousin who went with this company to fight for the southern Southern cause, or the cause of the Confederacy, and out of this company of a 100 men, only five lived to return.

"There was a drouth drought in Texas this year and only two men in the community raised any corn. The flour was shipped in by wagon train to the little store at [] Wheelock and we had to pay an enormous price for it. We lived out in the country after leaving the [?] fort attended the old Shiloh church. When my [parents?] came to Texas they did not have any team but oxen , and so they drove them to [?] their wagon. This made the travel slow and they were weeks getting to the Wheelock fort.

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"On the 10th day of Jan, 1866 I married Hansford Arnett , who had returned the year before from the service in the Confederate army. He [?] fought in several battles , some in Missouri , and some in other places , but he came through it with only a bullet wound in his arm. He passed away in 1879. We had six children , all living but one. Those living are Mrs Mollie Tate, near Marlin: Mrs Lizzie Richardson , who lives with me[.] Mrs Edna Hays: Stranger. Tom Arnett, Groesbeck: Robert Arnett, Kosse:

"I have lived with in five miles of Stranger ever since I married in 1866. I have seen the [?] towns surrounding grow from small communities to villages and then towns. I have seen the soldiers as they passed through Wheelock as they were going and coming from fighting for the Confederate Cause. We lived on the road which ran through Wheelock to San Antonio, and also to Houston. When the soldiers passed, they would often stop and demand command my mother to cook them something to eat. If the women did not feed them , they helped themselves to what ever they could find, such as groceries, meat , hogs , or chickens , or cattle. They considered they were fighting for as and it was our place to feed them. Very few of the folks refused to give them what they asked for.

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"I have lived [throuh?] through the trying days of Texas during the Reconstruction period, following the days of the War between the States, the Spanish - American war, and World war . [?] But the most trying things that we had were the days of reconstruction Reconstruction and the Indians. The delegates to the first reconstruction convention Reconstruction Convention were elected just two days before I was married and on a month from the day I was married , the convention met and was organized.

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"I came to the Stranger community with my husband when we married, in 1866. We traded at Bremond the nearest town at that time of any size. Marlin, over about 11 miles to the west was just a small village, as was Kosse to the east. This was long before the Houston and Texas railroad built through Kosse. To the north about fifteen miles was the little community in later years called Willow Springs, but now the town of Mart. his This community sprang up about the year 1870 , I think. I know that a few of the pioneers from the Ridge ([?]), moved to the Willow Spring community. Among them the Douglass, the Harlan' Harlan's , Jones, Cowan Cowan's and other's I do not remember.

"And now let me go back in memory to the early days of The Ridge as the Stranger community was called. The Ridge takes it name from a long strip of land from a point near Steele's or Garrett's place near Limestone county and extends in a southwesterly direction almost to the Robertson county line. It is in reality a ridge and the Stranger Stranger community lies on top of an elevated section from which one can look over a large section of the Big [reek?] Creek valley westward to the court-house at Marlin, even to Beans Hill which is the beginning of the Brazos.

"Many of the pioneers have passed on, but there are a few of us who lived in the days I have mentioned , following the war War between the states States . As we stand on the Ridge and gaze westward- eastward, northward and southward, our minds go back to the days of the past and once more we see in memory those other's others who helped

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to build the community. We see many horses and rigs of all sorts, the roads are winding, rough and full of mud holes in the rainy season, in the summer they are dusty and bumpy.

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“The stage coach at first passes by on its way to Marlin and the east to Kosse. There is no hurry, every one has plenty of time. We see once more the aristocratic Jasper Garrett, moving among his family and his neighbors , taking great pride in his family his neighbors and his friends. Once again Harris Kay conducts Sunday School in the old church -school house or they open their home to the community for a Christmas party. We can hear in memory the chuckling voice of Arch Hodge and his quiet humor, as the voice of Mrs [odge?] Hodge in her quiet matronly way.

“Then in memory one can see Jesse Brothers as he rides around his farm watching his men at work. Then it grows dark and one can see the hounds on the run. From the woods down the ravin ravine from the Ridge one can hear the baying of the dogs on the chase. Following the dogs are Uncly Billy brothers -Joe Sandlin, our humorist, some of the Erskines and the Garrets and some of the then younger generation. They are having a great time , when hunting was real sport and at the end of the chase they brought home the dear or the wild turkey.

“Around the corner of the road near the school house and church are the family of Jim Swinnea. And in the house are Ida and Lil and Floyd, and perhaps some neighbors passing the time of day. Ida and Lil are living in that house [?] today . A little farther to he the south and west sits John Eddins in his home. He is smoking a pipe, his face is covered with long whiskers, (the style of the day) , he is meditating over the days gone by, perhaps in the service of the Lost Cause. Its warm and in the house one can hear the hum of the sewing machine as “Grandma Eddins sings, “There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus: No not one— no n-o-t o-n-e.” 5 .

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“Once again I see beyond the old well on the south side of the road near Stranger store, just below the hills, a horse and buggy and in it sits a gentleman with an expression of peace with the world. He has a peg leg and he lets the horse have its way over the road. It is the mail carrier—Joel Roberts carrying the mail— and [he's?] been carrying it since Stranger got its post office and a name!

“Along the pages of memory there goes Dewitt Stone— still having a good time. He has just found a skeleton from an old Indian mound, and here comes a candidate for office where-upon Dewitt lifts up the skill and from thence hurriedly goes the candidate without waiting to ask him for his vote. Then there goes [a?] young doctor Poindexter in his buggy of bygone days, and once again we hear him tell the story of his first patient. For a whole month the new doctor had'nt had a patient and he did'nt see how he was to pay his board bill at “Granny Williams”.

“About sundown he gets a call and all night long he his patient lay groaning, grown pale then hot and pains in his side. The doctor tries all his remedies, it seems his patient is going to die in spite of all his efforts. [']He goes out to the hen-house and [rols?] rolls up a big pill and gives to the patient. Immediately he relaxes and falls into a peaceful sleep from which when he awakes the next morning the pain is gone and he is a well man, or at least for that time, the trouble being what was later known as an attack of appendicitus, but at that time it was just plain indigestion. Later Dr Piondexter spent many years of his successful career practicing medicine in Kosse, serving his old time friends 6 .

at Stranger.[?] Riding the winding roads a herd of cattle ahead, we see many of Strangers fathers and [grand?]-fathers with their riding boots astride a of horse horse's rounding ap the cattle[.] There [are?] bridles and harness for the buggies, surries, wagons with spring seats, and fine teams of horses and miles, such were the modes of travel and when the new machines called automobiles come in we hear these fathers and grand-fathers saying “you wont catch me in one of those “contraptions”!

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“Again ; down memories lane we see the neighbors meeting for a big picnic among the trees in Garretts pasture— plenty of well filled baskets — a string band and all day speaking , for it is election year. The [?] band is made up of country musicians from all sections of the county[,?] it sounded so good despite frequent discordant notes or misplaced key. There's a lull in the enthusiasm, things are beginning to drag. The band leader knows the remedy. Shaking his fist and bringing his hand down briskly, out comes loud and clear the strains of “Dixie” —and the crowd responds with the chorus of “I wish I wuz in de lan' [of?] cotton, ole times dar am not forgotten— Hurray— hurray . , in Dixie lan' I takes my stan' to lib an' die in Dixie””.

“A sudden gleam shines in the eyes of Jasper Garrett, John Eddins, George Barnes, Jesse Cornelison, Bill Clawson, Ed Vann, Dr Shaw and other old Confed's, including Dave Boyles of Reagan, (later Judge Boyles,) the spirit of “Dixie” is catching [?? daughter] sons, and daughter's grand-sons and grand daughters alike join in the chorus of hurrahs and there's new life in the crowd after the band plays Dixie, and the platform is clear cleared for and old time square dance.

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“Another look into memories pages and we see the old school house and church building which served for both, during the week for school and on Sundays the different denominations took their turn about holding services. It is a school day and Mr. J.A.Dunkam is teaching school. There are big boys and little boys. Big girls and little girls, and today these boys and girls are fathers and mothers of the younger generation. Professor Dunkam has passed on, after having led a successful teaching career [?] and afterward made a success as a banker and farmer in the Marlin community.

“But look ! there are other teachers who pass on the stage of lifes memory and leave their footprints on the sands of Time. There is John Lattimore whose father was a teacher too. Professor Stout , Blair , and others. All took their turn in the old church and school house combined. Then comes the Sunday services. [?] One incident stands out clearly in my

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mind. The Baptist's are having services. Thought the audience the deacons are passing the plate around with the "bread and wine" for communion.

"Down near the rear of the church is a young man who has imbibed of [the?] wine of the grapes a little too freely. He rises and remarks["?] I want some of that"! The deacon returns "You cant have it, You're not a Baptist". He comes back with "Well I'm a Methodist. Besides this church belongs to us all". The deacon replied "It may be your [cchurch?], but this is our day", our time to hold service". It was then that the argument grestronger grew/ stronger and str nger stronger until there sprang up two factions , one for, the other against "close Communion" and the outcome was the Baptist built their own church in the year 1902. 8 "Following the long procession down Memories Lane comes "Granny Moffett" — quiet, kindly, Old- timey, typical of the pioneer women in which she lived and spent her youth. Typical of the days of San Jacinto. [she?] She could tell you lots of things about the days when Texas was fighting for her freedom from Mexico. She ran with the other settlers in the Run- away Scrape as people fled from Santa Anna— before General Sam Houston turned the States destiny at San Jacinto. She could tell all about when Texas won her independence , and also the days of the Reconstruction when Texas also won her independence all over again , and her fight for the vote , after the men who were soldiers during the war War between the States had the vote taken from them. She saw the transformation from a Republic to a state.

"This reminds me that in the month of Febuary after I was married in January of 1866 that the Reconstruction convention met and was organized, with Throckmorton for President and did not adjourn til until April , and at a general election the constitution was adopted and the legialature met at Austin.[?] on On the 13th day of August , Throckmorton was inagurated governor and Wash [ones?] Jones Lieutenant Governor. It was in March of the next year 1867 that Congress was displeased with President Johnsons Johnson's plan of reconstruction and declared the governments of Texas and Louisiana provisional only. and in April of 1867 General Griffin, the military commander at Galveston prohibited all elections in Texas. Then on the 17th day of April he put the negroes on the juries[?]with an

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order issued preparing for the registration of the voters. The best of my memory the voting strength was about equal, around [?] 56,000 whites to 47,500 neg-[?] [?] 9 “Looking down Memories Lane there unfolds a panorama of Texas history with the incidents politically, socially and economically that has made Texas what it is today, but the picture that I like the best is the simple life of neighborliness and the companionship of the pioneers as they met in social gatherings, church, schools, [alldday?] singings, picnics, celebrations and in some year [?] , the political meetings.

“Entertainment came from fellowship, conversation, music, and stunts for the young, instead pf picture shows on fine Sunday afternoons the young men and women rode their horses, played and enjoyed the simple sport sport's. Unlike today-where the young eople people go to the movies and to the professional entertainments with no contact with their neighbors.

“Yes! Things are different! The old Ridge itself is the same. The birds still, sing merrily as they fly from tree to tree, just as they did in the fifties and sixties when I married and came to the Ridge. The old Big Creek flows or stands still just as in the days gone by. It is we who are different, and we are different because the progress of civilization has made us so.